**Madurai welcomes Bharat Yatra with 2000-Strong Human Chain and Freedom Bikers Rally**

*Clarion call for Surakshit Bachpan-Surakshit Bharat (Safe Childhood-Safe India)*

**Madurai, 14th September, 2017, Thursday:** The [Bharat Yatra](http://bharatyatra.online), launched by Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi on 11 September, reached Madurai on 14th September, the fourth day of the 35-day long march across the country to build unprecedented awareness on combating child sexual abuse and trafficking.

The march in Madurai, led by Rear Admiral Rahul Shrawat (Retd.), Managing Director, Kailash Satyarthi Children’s Foundation was joined by Mr M Veera Raghav Rao (District Magistrate) at a large public event near Thiagarajar College of Art and Science in Theppakulum.
Nearly two thousand youth made a human chain across the sacred water body to signify protecting the future for children. The event also saw a bike rally by spirited Freedom Riders. The Yatra marchers called upon the youth of the country to step up and fight for children across India. They urged people of Madurai to strive towards building a safe childhood and a safe India.

Said Admiral Shrawat, “The Bharat Yatra is to shake the conscience of our society. The incidents are increasing day by day. As per recent surveys, there are an estimated 12 lakh child prostitutes in the country. Where have they come from? All of them have been trafficked. This march is to ensure that no child is killed, no girl is raped and that this country is ready to fight this moral epidemic.”

Ever since its launch, Bharat Yatra has been drawing enormous support from citizens across India, including Amitabh Bachchan who tweeted to his fans to support the Yatra. Earlier, Union Minister for Shipping and Finance Mr Pon Radhakrishnan had flagged off the Yatra from Kanyakumari along with Mr Satyarthi. In Trivandrum, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan assured whole hearted support from his government in eradicating the menace of child sexual abuse and trafficking.
The second leg of Yatra flagged off from Chennai on 13th March, which will travel via Vellore to merge with the main Yatra in Bengaluru. Actor Dhanush, former Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss and film producer and singer Latha Rajinikanth were present to show their solidarity for the Bharat Yatra. Indian Film composer Illaiyaraaja too has supported the cause passionately.

CII-Young India also declared their support for the Bharat Yatra across the country, stating that people need to join hands to eradicate child sexual abuse.

District Magistrate, M Veera Raghav Rao said, “Out of 522000 students studying in Madurai, even one child subjected to violence will be a black mark on our society. Our district administration will ensure that the laws are effectively implemented”

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had sent a personal letter to Kailash Satyarthi extending his support to the Yatra,which will cover 11000 kilometres across 22 States, including Tamil Nadu. Some of the key cities it covers include Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Guwahati, Bhopal, Jaipur, Srinagar among others.

At Kanniyakumari during the flag off Mr Satyarthi had declared, “I will not rest till children of this country are not safe. I am not going to stop fighting if the raping and abuse do not stop. I cannot sleep in peace until we win our war against rape and abuse. This moral epidemic haunts our nation, and it is time we fight against it, together.”

Re-iterating his mission behind launching the Bharat Yatra, he said “Why am I marching? Because my children are being raped. I refuse to accept that eight children go missing and two are raped every hour. Each time if a single child is in danger, India is in danger. Bharat Yatra is to make India safe again for our children.” Kailash Satyarthi has been campaigning for the freedom, safety and security for children across the globe for the past 36 years. His Nobel Peace Prize (2014) was for his continuous efforts and struggle for the rights children.

The Yatra is the launch of the three-year campaign against child rape and child sexual abuse which is aimed at increasing awareness and reporting of the cases, strengthening intuitional response including medical health and compensations, ensuring protection for victims and witnesses during trials and increasing convictions of child sexual abuse in a time bound manner.

 **About Kailash Satyarthi Children’s Foundation**

The Foundation’s mission is to create, implement and advocate child-friendly policies that ensure the holistic development and empowerment of children. For achieving these goals, the Foundation encourages government, businesses, civil society as well as children and the youth to participate in strategies and action that will safeguard children from the worst forms of abuse, including lack of education and health. For more information, visit: [www.satyarthi.org.in](http://www.satyarthi.org.in)

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